



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Fishing News

Conservation and Recreation



Hot spots to hook summer catfish

Catfish are biting in every stream of any size, all lakes and many Iowa farm ponds. Invite someone to go fishing for catfish this summer – it could be your best fishing trip ever.

Here's some hot spots:

Northwest

- [Clear Lake](#), Cerro Gordo County – catch catfish over 20 inches (many 5- to 10-pound fish) with cut bait or chicken liver on the edge of rush beds or edges of rock reefs; early morning and evening bite is best.
- [Mississippi River](#) – look for areas with a big tree snag in the larger side channels. **Channel Catfish**: use stink bait above the snag or rock pile so the bait can “ooze” its way into the structure and lure the catfish out. **Flathead Catfish**: try a 6- to -8- inch bullhead or green sunfish as bait above large snags where flatheads spend the day and come out at night to hunt; hook the bait near the dorsal fin and let it swim around over a 2 or 3 ounce sinker.
- [Missouri River](#) – lots of opportunities to catch channel, blue and flathead catfish. **Channel Catfish**: try worms, chicken livers and dip along the wing dikes, brush piles and along the revetment. **Flathead Catfish**: use live bait (bluegill, green

sunfish, bullheads, etc.) off the tips of wing dikes and rock structures. **Blue Catfish** - try fresh cut bait fished off the bottom, in or near the current.

- [Snyder Bend](#), Woodbury County – try large crayfish (hook them through the tail) along the outside bend in deeper water with rocks.

Northeast

- [Cedar River](#), Black Hawk and Bremer Counties – use dead/live chubs, nightcrawlers, stink baits or livers fished on the bottom of the river in snags in outside bends near current. If you don't catch a fish within 5-10 minutes, move to the next snag.
- [Lake Meyer](#), Winneshiek County – catch lots of 12- to 15-inch channel cat with a chance to hook one up to 27-inches (about 8 pounds). Use a bigger minnow hooked by the tail, squishing the head to release the natural oils. Try also a small sunfish or sucker cut into small chunks. Find catfish along dam faces or rocky areas in the evenings and night and around stump fields or submersed logs in the day.

Southeast

- [Diamond Lake](#), Poweshiek County – try stink baits in the mornings and evenings.
- [Lake Darling](#), Washington County – catch 14- to 16-inch channel cats with a chunk of chicken liver on a circle hook fished under a bobber along the rip-rapped shoreline near submerged brush.

Southwest

- [East](#) and [West Nishnabotna Rivers](#) – try nightcrawlers, crawdads, chicken liver and stink baits in the pools and deeper water on the outside bends of the rivers.
- [Lake Icaria](#), Adams County – catch lots of channel catfish of all sizes; many are 15- to 22-inches. Use nightcrawlers or cut bait near the fish mounds or fishing jetties.
- [Red Rock Reservoir](#), Marion County – drift cut bait (creek chubs and shrimp) in the upper end of the lake in water less than 10 feet.

Insider tips from DNR fisheries biologists

Lakes stratify, or form layers, in the summer, with cool, oxygen-deprived waters sinking to the bottom. Do not fish in water deeper than 8 to 10 feet. Look for catfish in deep structure such as rock piles – our [interactive fishing atlas](#) can help you quickly find these spots. If you don't have a bite in 15 minutes, move to the next structure.

[Get weekly fishing reports](#)

More great tips:

- [6 Tips for Hooking Summer Catfish](#)
 - [How to fish for channel catfish](#)
 - [Helpful Guide to Identify Iowa's Large Catfishes](#)
 - [Fishing the Thermocline for Better Summer Success](#)
 - [Get the lowdown on river fishing in Iowa](#)
 - [Must-Have Summer Fishing Tips](#)
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